

**Political History Collection
Interview H.0054.02 : Tape 2**

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Interviewed by: Paljor Tsarong
Name: Lhamo Tsering [Tib. lha mo tshe ring]
Gender: Male
Age: 68
Date of Birth: 1924

Abstract

Lhamo Tsering was the secretary-aide of Gyalo Thondup and was part of the second group of Tibetans trained by the CIA in America in 1958-59. After returning to India, he came to manage much of the CIA's operation in Tibet for Gyalo Thondup. In this interview, he discusses Gyalo Thondup's response to Nehru's invitation and questions about the situation in Tibet, and how he and Gyalo left Hong Kong because of their opinions toward communism. He talks about the meeting Gyalo had with the Chinese leaders and what they discussed, and also about his work in the 1950s and his relationship with the Dedön Tshogpa ((Tibet) Welfare Association). Finally, he discusses how he thinks that the Tibetans in India didn't have hope regarding the Tibetan government after Chushigandru was set up, and how they only hoped for foreign support.

Tape 2

Q: In 1947, India gained independence and Nehru was the Prime Minister, and Sawangchemmo [Gyalo] was invited by Nehru [to India] for a week. During this time, what was the Indian government saying and what was their policy? Now this was in 1949-50. What were they telling Kungö [Gyalo]? At this time, what was the Indian government's policy?

A: Yes. It was in 1949. At the Prime Minister's place. Tea was served and there wasn't any advice given. It seems that the Foreign Minister asked him something. At that time, the Chinese were starting their liberation [of Tibet]. He was asked, if he went back, what he thought the political and other situations were in Tibet. Sawangchemmo said that he was young and still studying, and that he was not able to tell them about the situation with Tibet. He said something like that. Of course, at that time, he said a lot, but I didn't take much notice. Then Prime Minister Nehru gave him a dinner. I think his [Nehru's] father was there. Then the others—there were not many there. After dinner, they sat in the sitting room and showed some photos of Indira Gandhi and Nehru's trip to Ladakh, where they were fully clad in Ladakhi dress. I don't know what the reason for this was, but that was brought out and not others [other pictures]. So there was no talk about politics. Before I arrived, I don't know what they talked about. He went to the Foreign Office, and Nehru—the dinner was on that day, I think. I can't tell you if he talked about politics or not. In those days, I didn't take any notice. If I had, then I would have written [about it].

Q: Yes, anyway, did he go to other offices?

A: Yes, he did go [to other offices]. He went to see the Lok Sabha [Lower House of Parliament] as an observer [Tib. zur nyan]—where the winter session was going on. Then he went to see the Gandhi Memorial and the Qutub Minar.

Q: So during this time, if one looks at the books, one can see that the Indian policy was clear. They were saying to talk with the Chinese and over many years, they never helped. However, at that time, was there another policy?

A: At that time, I really... if I think about it, then the reason for inviting Sawangchemmo was probably to think in the long run and establish some relationship with Tibet. At that time, the Chinese had not liberated Tibet. The Chinese were about to come and [Tibet was about to] be liberated. So I think that was the reason. On the one hand, he had been to China [and] was educated there, and so he was well informed. Secondly, he was the brother of the Dalai Lama and no matter what, he would have been in some important position. So, I think he [Nehru] was probably thinking along these lines to establish some relationship. Anyway, at that time, I wasn't that old and never took notice. I know that he was invited, but the real reason [for this], I can't tell you.

Q: I have another thing to ask you, but it's not something important. After the Guomindang lost, you both went to Hong Kong. At this time, why did you leave for Hong Kong? On the one hand, did you view the Communists negatively, or was it that you had

longtime connections with the Guomindang?

A: No, it was not like that. Ideologically there was nothing—both [with] the Communist Party and the Guomindang. We just ran away. So we went to Hong Kong to ask for permission to go to India. There was no connection with Taiwan. Taiwan was hopeless and withdrawing from their land, their offices.

Q: But you could have remained there?

A: If we had stayed there, then the Chinese would have considered him a prized possession [Tib. tsa ba chen bo]. They would have taken him to Tibet and used [him] for the liberation.

Q: Did he think along these lines?

A: The Chinese did. But he did not. Otherwise, he would have stayed, right?

Q: No. No. Did he leave thinking that the Chinese were going to use him?

A: Anyway, the reason for leaving was ideological [Tib. Ita ba], he did not like the Communists at all.

Q: Ah, that's what I was asking you.

A: Yes, ideological. The reason we left was that, from the beginning, we never liked Communism.

Q: Then in 1952, he went from Lhasa to Kalimpong, right?

A: To Darjeeling also. In 1952, he moved from Kalimpong to Darjeeling. The Dalai Lama's mother was in Kalimpong and she moved to Darjeeling.

Q: Then from Darjeeling to Lhasa?

A: Yes, from Darjeeling via Gangtok to Lhasa. In 1952.

Q: During this time, Trunyla, you were there for quite a few months, right?

A: I stayed for only six months. We arrived in February and ran away in the sixth month.

Q: During this time, was there a feeling, a thinking, on the part of the people that the Kashag was not doing things too well? That they were sort of getting close to the Chinese? It's possible that they thought that way, right?

A: In 1952, it had only been two years since the Chinese aggression [Tib. btsan dbang]. So I don't know whether the people liked the Kashag or not. What Sawangchemmo [Gyalo] was saying was that before they start the Communist liberation [read: reforms], if we fixed up our taxes with the misers and if we did the democratic reforms, then it may have been more useful. Now, he said that and the government did have plans for reforms. However, Sawangchemmo said it too forcefully. What he was saying was that each [aristocratic] household, if they really needed an estate, they should keep it. All others should be given to the government. He said that forcefully. He told them that he was going to offer Jangsebshar [Tib. lcang gseb shar] House to the government and it was sufficient if he stayed at Gyatso [Tib. rgya mtsho]. He told them that he was going to give all the estates [to the government] and requested that at Jangsebshar, the government start a school. When he said that, and though I did not hear it myself, it was said that "Seykusho Gyalo Thondup la is redder than the red Chinese. He wants to liberate first." Some of the ranking leaders said to me that like the house in Lhasa, there were over 300 other households with estates, and that if all of these were given up, then how were the more than 300 households going to make a living [for themselves]? That Sawangchemmo was too forceful with what he said. Anyway, in addition to that, he had a great regard for Lukhangwa and Lobsang Tashi. It was said a lot that he felt that Lukhangwa was really someone who would sacrifice himself for Tibet. However, I was not there when he went to see them, but he took me when he went to meet the Chinese. I did not go see the Kashag or other important leaders.

Q: Did you meet any of the Chinese leaders?

A: Yes.

Q: What did they say?

A: Sawangchemmo argued with them a lot. He disagreed [with them] regarding Lukhangwa and also [with] the reception regarding the Panchen Lama. They were saying that it should be a grand reception. What the government was saying was that the meeting and relations between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama had already been laid down by tradition and that they would not do anything outside of it. So Sawangchemmo argued a lot about this and he told them that they had signed the 17-Point Agreement saying that the culture and the tradition of the Tibetans and the status of the Dalai Lama was to remain intact. But by doing this, they were interfering and making changes. So he said that forcefully.

Q: Last time, we did talk about it, but not in detail, regarding Kalimpong and Darjeeling. After Jora and Chayü, then via Bomdila, he came to Kalimpong, right?

A: He went to his house in Darjeeling. It was the same one as the present one.

Q: Then when he got there, what did he do?

A: In Darjeeling?

Q: Yes.

A: We went in the second month of 1952, right? In the sixth month, we ran away. It was something like the 16th of the sixth month that we arrived in Darjeeling. In 1952, nothing happened. We just listened to the situation in Tibet.

Q: Nothing about starting an organization, et cetera?

A: No, not at that time. But in Kalimpong, there was the Tibetan government's Tshongji or the trade agent. His name was Lobsang something. Later, he became Governor of Ngari [Tib. mnga' ris spyi khyab]. He died under a struggle session. Later he was a Khenjung. At that time, Kungö Shakabpa was there. He had been staying in Kalimpong since 1950.

Q: Since 1950?

A: Yes, the delegation could not go to Beijing and it was withdrawn, and since then [after that], Shakabpa stayed there. I don't know if he did go to meet the Dalai Lama or not, but he was permanently staying at Kalimpong. So they met and talked about what to do and how they [would] do it. I had no relations with them. I know that they were meeting, but what the talk was about, I don't know. Anyway, they did start an organization, yes, they did start one.

Q: From 1952 on?

A: Yes, from 1952 on, and seeing what they could do for the country—anyway, they were discussing Tibet.

Q: Just the three of them?

A: Yes, the three of them. Kungö Pandatsang was there, but he was not staying [there] permanently. And your father was not staying [there] permanently [if Tsarong had any talks, must be grandfather]. So the three of them were there permanently. Then there was... Oh, that was later. Lukhangwa came later, he was not there at that time. He came sometime in '54 or '55. So there were only the three of them in Kalimpong and there wasn't any other who could lead.

Q: So when they met, they did it in Kalimpong?

A: Yes, [they were] coming to Kalimpong.

Q: Sawangchemmo was coming to Kalimpong?

A: Yes, he was coming there and was staying at Reting.

Q: Where?

A: Reting Labrang. Shakabpa was staying at the same house. Then Kungö Tshongji, he stayed at his house at the 9th mile.

Q: You are speaking of Khenjung, right?

A: After that, it was Kungö Khenjung. Oh, before that was also Khenjung. His name is Lobsang Tsewang [Tib. blo bzang tshe dbang]. The latter one was.... His name is Lobsang Gyentsen. It is Jayangkyl [Tib. 'jam dbyangs dkyil] Khenjung Lobsang Gyentsen. So it was the three of them. Then later, the three of them came. Lukhangwa came. [The other two, I think, were Gyantse Pejö Thubden Nyinji [Tib. rgyal rtse dpal chos thub bstan nyin byed] and Wangdüla.] I don't know what the connection was with Lukhangwa, but the three of three, we [he & GT] were having contacts.

Q: The three were later?

A: Yes.

Q: When did they come?

A: I don't know. I don't have it written in my document. It could have been in '53, maybe '54? Now, the six of them were saying that they were committing aggressions against Tibet, and they were reporting this to the UNO.

Q: Now, from my interviews, what I have heard is this—though I don't know if it's true or not. However, it is said that Sawangchemmo agreed to do all the work connected with America and foreign countries. Now, this khenjung was to do all the work connected with Tibet and Kungö Shakabpa, relations in India.

A: This is probably correct.

Q: You think so?

A: Yes, as you have related, it seems that it was this way. I heard that Kungö Khenjung looked for good people to send to Tibet. Kungö Shakabpa had good relations with India. Sawangchemmo went to foreign countries. So this must be true, though I cannot tell you specifically.

Q: Yes, I am asking you about your perception. Though I can't be certain, some say that the relations within Tibet was done not with the government, but [done] secretly with five or six people. Drönyerchemmo Phala was the main one. The people in Kalimpong were consulting Phala.

A: That I don't know [about] at all, whether they were consulting [with] Kungö Phala or not. However, one thing, from the first batch

of people who were sent to the U.S. for wireless communication [training two] were sent to Samye. Now, when they went to Lhasa, they met Phala. So from this, it seems that there was a connection.

Q: From 1952-53, what were you doing in Kalimpong?

A: In 1950, I spent five to six months with the delegation, right? Actually, I was told to go to Taiwan via the Philippines since Sawangchemmo was held up there. I got the visa and everything. Then I was told to help with the delegation and could not go. Then I stayed in Kalimpong at Reting Labrang.

Q: So what work were you doing?

A: I was doing some writing in Chinese for a Hong Kong newspaper.

Q: Were you also translating some?

A: Yes, some, but I said I didn't want to do that. Later, when the Dalai Lama went to China in 1954, they also needed some news about Tibet. So they asked me to be their reporter and [said] that they would pay him [me]. That I said I wouldn't do. In Hong Kong, there was this newspaper called the "Independent Struggle [Tib. rang btsan 'thab rtsod]", and they wanted me to be their regular Indian correspondent.

Q: Where was this, in Hong Kong?

A: Hong Kong. I wrote and sent [pieces to] Hong Kong. At that time, they didn't understand the situation in India and Tibet very well. So I knew that and they were happy when I sent them [pieces]. I'm not an expert, but I know the situation .

Q: So you didn't do that?

A: No, I did not.

Q: So, what did you do in 1953?

A: No, this was in 1952.

Q: And what about 1953?

A: I served at Yabshi House when I was there. I did not have any work. Oh, when I was staying there, at that time, we did not have a proper map of Tibet. Sawangchemmo got quite a lot of maps from the US. So I spent a year drawing maps. Later, we drew good maps. You must have seen them.

Q: No, I have not. [He had one section in his drawer. It was about 3 feet by 3 feet, a relief map, in Tibetan]. So you did maps?

A: Yes, I did a lot of copying and drawing. Then in '53-54, around that [time], I did some work for them, like giving letters and messages to Kalimpong.

Q: To Kalimpong and [question not finished]

A: To Shakabpa and Khenjung. When Sawangchemmo could not go, then I was sent. So like that, and in 1957, I was formally in it.

Q: The Welfare Association, right?

A: No, not that. I was sent to America, right?

Q: The reason I am asking you all of these questions is that I need to know some details about the Dedön Tshogpa. So at that time, you did some work [for them]?

A: I don't know much about this. I took some messages for the Dedön Tshogpa. Who was in it and how they worked, I had no connection with them. We only did intelligence work and that was not in that [the Dedön Tshogpa].

Q: In the Kham and Amdo areas, there were quite a lot of revolts against the Chinese, right? Now, which areas were the revolts in?

A: Now, regarding this, the ones that we [CIA] had contacted were the ones that I already mentioned to you the last time. The first one was Chang Namtso. The second was Jagra Pemba. The third was Chang Nagchuka, then Markham and Litang. Besides this, there were a lot of fierce fights all over the place. That I don't know [about] in any detail. But the [above] were the ones that we had contact with.

Q: Now, the reason for the revolts was that they were going to start democratic reforms, the elites and lamas were arrested. Was that it?

A: Yes, from that they got turned off [Tib. zhe log pa red]. From the religious side, they were going to destroy it, as well as the customs and culture. So they saw that and thought that we could no longer bear it because they were going to get rid of the [Tibetan] race [Tib. mi rigs] itself. So that was the most important [thing], the destruction of the race, religion, customs and culture.

Q: Now, those who were working in Tibet, in Lhasa, do you know that they had connections with the revolts?

A: Our first connection was with Lhasa, right? Other than that, I never heard that there was any connection. What we were doing was asking America and foreign countries to help us. After the Chushigandru started, I don't think there was much hope placed on Lhasa. The government had already many different people and views in it, like having variegated color [Tib. khra khra ba khra], wasn't that it? So it was thought that if the secrecy was lost, then it would be too much. What I think is that they probably did not place much hope in the government. But it was not because they did not believe in them, but because if they did, then it would have become harmful. Their hope mostly laid with getting help from abroad.

Q: Now, even if there was no connection from the government, could it have been that they had secrecy?

A: There probably was secrecy. For example, it seems that in 1955, when the Dalai Lama was returning, Trijang [Tib. khri byang] Rimpoche and others in Kham had some connections in various places. That was there. However, there was nothing militarily.